

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of identifying relevant experts substantially in real-time using a search request from a user, comprising:
  - maintaining an updateable and searchable database of expert profiles, wherein the profiles include attributes of a particular expert;
  - receiving a search request from the user; and
  - applying a weight designated by the user to the attributes of a desired expert.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
  - searching the database using the search request; and
  - displaying a list of ranked experts, wherein each expert's position in the ranked list is determined by a ranking algorithm that uses the weights of each attribute.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the attribute is the expert's availability.
4. The method of claim 3 wherein the database automatically updates the expert's availability.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein the attribute is the expert's area of knowledge.
6. The method of claim 1 wherein the attribute is the expert's available time until a next assignment.
7. The method of claim 1 wherein the attribute is the expert's proximity to the user.
8. The method of claim 1 wherein the attribute is the expert's available contact method.
9. The method of claim 1 wherein the attribute is the expert's travel speed.

10. The method of claim 2 wherein the user is automatically connected to a selected expert by interfacing with the expert's name as it appears on the displayed list.

11. The method of claim 2 wherein a menu appears with available contact mediums when an expert is selected.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the contact medium is email and when selected a dialog box appears for the user to prepare and send an email to the expert.

13. The method of claim 11 wherein the contact medium is telephone and when selected the expert's telephone number is displayed.

14. The method of claim 1 further comprising:  
selecting a messaging communication mode by which the user contacts a selected expert.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein the profile is able to be created by the expert.

16. The method of claim 1 wherein the profile is able to be updated by the expert.

17. A system for searching for experts having particular attributes, comprising:  
a searchable and updateable database of expert information, wherein said database  
comprises a plurality of expert profiles, each of said profiles including data relating to one or  
more attributes of a particular expert; and  
a user interface for allowing users to identify desired characteristics of a desired  
expert, wherein the user interface also allows users to assign weights to one or more of the  
desired characteristics.

18. The system of claim 17 further comprising a processor for comparing a user's  
desired expert characteristics to the attributes stored in each of said expert profiles.

19. The system of claim 18 further comprising a display for displaying to the user  
a list of experts that fit one or more of the user's desired characteristics.

20. The system of claim 19 wherein the list of experts is ranked according to a  
correlation between each expert's expert profile and the user's desired expert characteristics,  
wherein the list is further ranked according to weights that the user has assigned to certain  
characteristics.

21. The system of claim 17 wherein a user interfaces with the database via a  
remote wireless or wireline Internet connection.